



Monkey's Conversion



Monkey Series 3

Monkey's Conversion

This is the third in a 34-part series of books telling the story of Monkey that is found in the ancient Chinese fantasy novel *Journey to the West*. In the previous volume, the Monkey King frustrated the heavenly soldiers and generals and turned Heaven upside down.

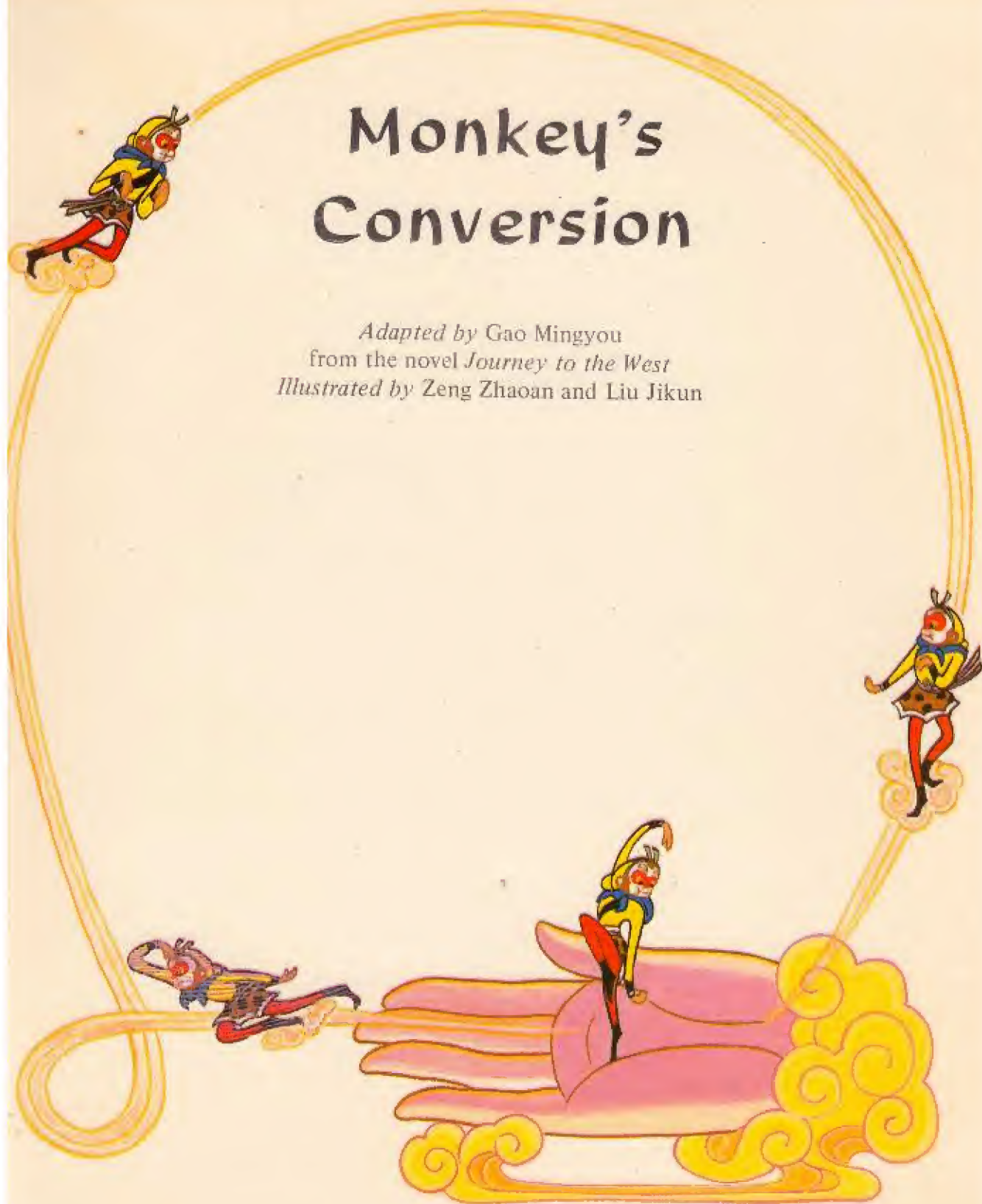
Monkey's Conversion, illustrated by 74 coloured pictures, tells how the Buddha, at the request of the Jade Emperor, traps the Monkey King under the Five Elements Mountain. Five hundred years later the Tang Priest Xuanzang rescues Monkey and accepts him as his disciple. After being given a white dragon horse, they go together to the West to fetch the true Buddhist scriptures.

The next book in the series:

The next volume in the series, *Trouble on Black Wind Mountain*, tells how the Tang Priest's cassock is stolen by the Black Bear Spirit when Monkey shows it off at the Guanyin Monastery. To get it back, Monkey makes trouble on Black Wind Mountain before the Bodhisattva Guanyin agrees to help subdue the Black Bear Spirit and get the cassock back.

Monkey's Conversion

*Adapted by Gao Mingyou
from the novel *Journey to the West*
Illustrated by Zeng Zhaoan and Liu Jikun*



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The Monkey King, Sun Wukong, had been making terrible havoc in the Heavenly Palace. None of the heavenly generals and soldiers could do anything about it. The Jade Emperor was so alarmed that he sent the Helpful Sage and True Lord to go to the West and ask the Buddha to subdue the Monkey King.



The Helpful Sage and True Lord went to the Buddha's Thunder Monastery. There he bowed reverently to the Buddha and told him the story of what had happened in the Heavenly Palace. When he had finished, the Buddha said to the assembled Bodhisattvas, "You pray here in the dharma hall while I go take care of this evil monkey."



Accompanied by the Venerable Ananda and the Venerable Kasyapa, the Buddha left the Thunder Monastery and went straight to the gate of the Hall of the Miraculous Mist, where Sun Wukong, with three heads and six arms, was still waving his as-you-will cudgel. The soldiers hadn't been able to get anywhere near him.



The Buddha ordered the fighting to stop. Sun Wukong used his magic to turn back into himself and said angrily to the Buddha, "Who are you, dear sir? How dare you stop the fighting like that?" "I am the Venerable Sakyamuni from the Western Land of Perfect Bliss," replied the Buddha with a smile. "You have dared to rebel against Heaven, you monkey, but you'd better surrender right now."



"I'll stop fighting," replied the Monkey King, "if the Jade Emperor moves out of his palace and hands it over to me. Otherwise I'll go on making havoc for him."



"You monkey spirit," said the Buddha with scornful laughter, "what makes you think you can seize the Heavenly Palace?" "I can perform seventy-two transformations and I can ride a somersault cloud that takes me sixty thousand miles with a single jump," Sun Wukong replied. The Buddha stretched out his hand, "Well, then," he said, "if you can somersault out of my palm, then I'll make sure the Jade Emperor gives his Heavenly Palace to you."



After hearing that offer, Monkey laughed to himself and thought, "I can do that. Your palm is so small, not even an foot wide. How could I fail to jump out of it?" He jumped into the palm of the Buddha's hand.



"Here I go!" shouted Sun Wukong as he went like a streak of light and disappeared.



Sun Wukong stopped when he saw five flesh-pink pillars. "This must be the end of Heaven," he said. "I should leave a mark here." He pulled out one of his hairs, turned it into a writing brush and used it to write THE GREAT SAGE EQUALLING HEAVEN WAS HERE on the middle pillar.



When he had finished, Sun Wukong took his hair back and somersaulted back to where he had started from. "How about it?" bragged Monkey. "The Jade Emperor will have to turn his palace over to me." "You never left my palm," replied the Buddha. Sun Wukong didn't believe it. "Come with me to the end of Heaven and I'll show you the mark I made there," he said and prepared to go.



The Buddha stopped him with a smile, "There's no need to go. Just look down." When Sun Wukong looked, he was astonished to see that the words he had written were on the middle finger of the Buddha's right hand. The ink was not yet dry.



"How could that be?" cried the Monkey King. "I wrote on a pillar supporting the sky, not on your finger. How did it get on your finger? Let me try again." He got ready to jump but the Buddha lowered his hand over him. The five fingers turned into five mountains, one for each of the elements Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth. Sun Wukong lay pinned under the Five Elements Mountain.



When the Jade Emperor saw that Sun Wukong had been pinned down by the Buddha, he jubilantly ordered a banquet to be laid on in the Buddha's honour. After all the guests had drunk enough to make them tipsy, the Miraculous Patrolling Officer appeared. "That monkey has poked his head out," he reported.



"It doesn't matter," said the Buddha, who took out a strip of paper with words on it and told his two followers, "Paste this on top of the Five Elements Mountain." After they did so, the mountain was sealed tight.



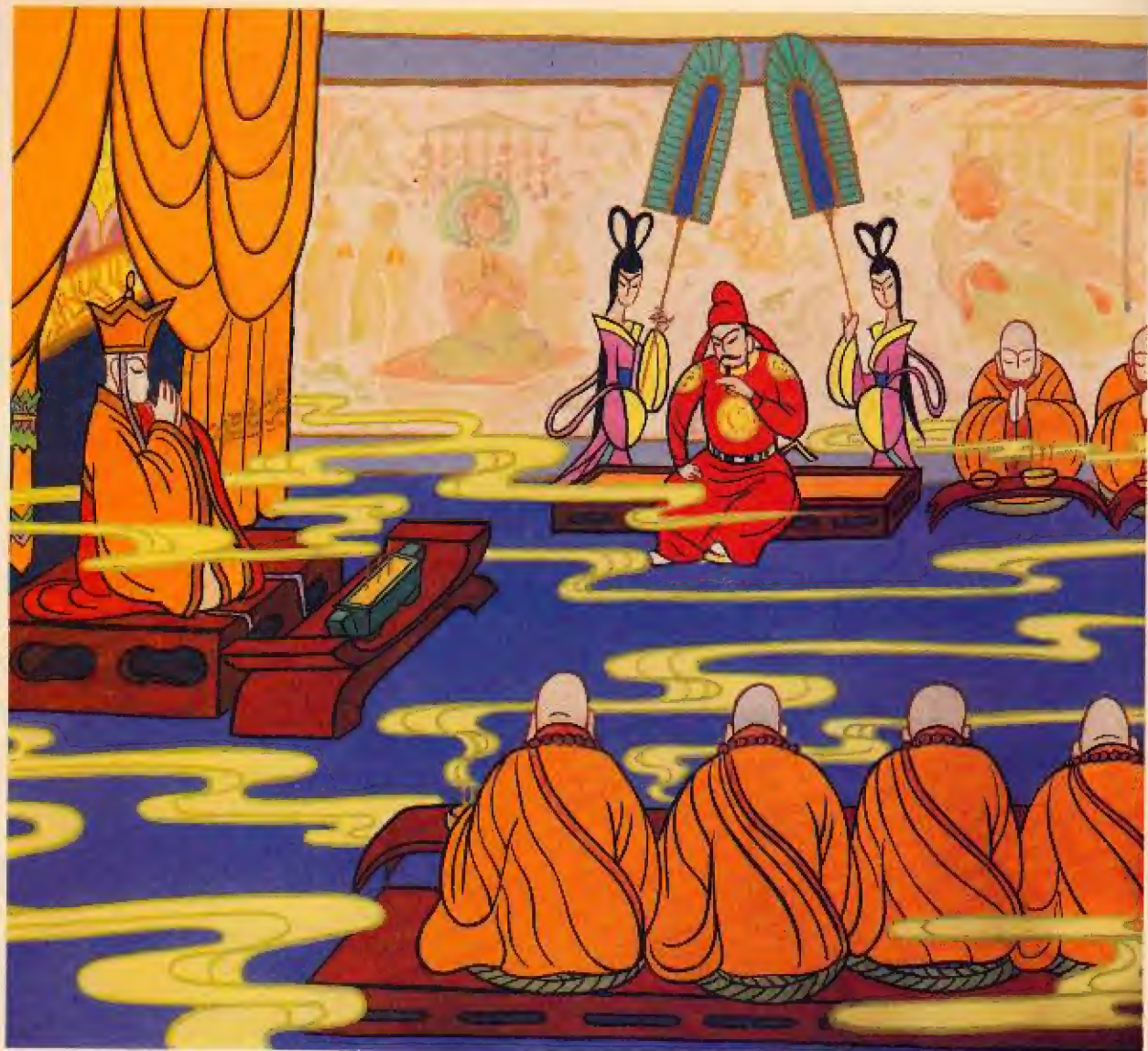
Sun Wukong's head was outside the mountain, so he could breathe, and his hands could wave outside, but the rest of his body was stuck inside.



When the Buddha passed the Five Elements Mountain on his way back to the West, he took pity on Monkey and chanted to the local mountain god, "When Monkey feels hungry, give him iron pills to eat, and when he is thirsty, give him molten copper to drink. In five hundred years when the Tang Priest comes to the West to get the scriptures, he will pass this way and rescue him."



Five hundred years later, in the city of Chang'an of the Tang Dynasty there was a monk named Chen who recited scriptures in the Huasheng Temple. He came from a family of scholars and had been a monk since he was very young. His Buddhist name was Xuanzang (which is pronounced Sywanzang in two syllables), and the Tang Emperor Taizong had given him the position of Chief Monk of the Empire.



The Tang Emperor Taizong believed in Buddhism and often went to temples to listen to Buddhist monks praying for the peace of the people in the empire.



One day Emperor Taizong called the monks together and asked, "I have heard that there are true scriptures in the Thunder Monastery in the West, where the Buddha lives, that can save the innocent from disaster. Who will go there to fetch the scriptures?" The monk Xuanzang immediately stepped forward, made a low bow and said, "Though I am not clever, I would like to go to the West to get the scriptures."



Very pleased to hear this, the Emperor raised Xuanzang to his feet. He called the monk "Brother Tang Priest" and presented him with a precious cassock. Xuanzang thanked him and vowed, "I am going to the West. If I fail to get the true scriptures, I will not return."



The next day, Emperor Taizong asked his civil and military officials to see the Tang Priest off, gave him a white horse and sent two disciples to accompany him. Xuanzang thanked the Emperor and set off at once.



After leaving Chang'an, the three travelled for several days, until early one morning they faced a high mountain in front of them. The going was so rough that they had to walk slowly on foot, pulling the thick undergrowth aside as they went.



Halfway up the mountain they all fell into a pit. Loud shouts came from the top of the pit. "Get them! Get them!" Terribly frightened, Xuanzang peeked out and saw a crowd of devils coming at them. He closed his eyes, shaking all over.



The devils dragged them out and tied them up. When the Tang Priest heard the Demon King order his devils to kill the two attendants and eat them, he swooned into a dead faint.



When the Tang Priest came to, he saw an old man standing beside him. The old man helped him up and said, "Those devils who attacked you were tiger spirits, wild bull spirits and bear spirits. Come with me and I'll show you where to go." The Tang Priest bowed low to the old man and thanked him.



The Tang Priest led his horse to the main road. Just there the old man disappeared with a puff of wind and rose into the sky on the back of a red-crested white crane. A piece of paper with four lines of verse on it fluttered down from the sky: *I am the Planet Venus of the Western Heaven, who came to earth to save your life. In the journey ahead you will have new disciples. Do not in your troubles feel angry with the scriptures.* After reading this, the Tang Priest worshipped Heaven.



Then he continued on his difficult journey, feeling very lonely. There were no signs of people anywhere. Suddenly a gust of wind and a leopard appeared before him, roaring ferociously. The terrified horse fell to its knees on the ground, and all of the Tang Priest's strength couldn't make it budge.



At that very moment, a man came across the hillside with a steel pitchfork in his hand. Xuanzang watched the man fight the leopard for two hours. As the leopard began to tire, the man plunged the pitchfork into the leopard's chest and killed it.



Then the man helped the Tang Priest up. "Don't be frightened, Venerable Monk," he said. "I'm a hunter who lives in these mountains. My name is Liu Boqin. Where did you come from, Venerable Monk?" The Tang Priest, still trembling, said after a while, "I am a monk sent by the Tang Emperor to go to the West to get the scriptures. That leopard appeared as I was going along. Thank you for saving my life."



Liu Boqin said, "This is still the territory of the Great Tang, so I'm a Tang citizen. Please come with me to my hut and have a rest. Tomorrow I'll take you on your way." The Tang Priest thanked him and went along with the hunter.



The next day Liu Boqin set out with him. After a while a very steep mountain loomed in front of them. Halfway up it they heard a shout from the foot of the mountain, "My master's here! My master's here!"



The Tang Priest and Liu Boqin followed the shouts with their horse. Several miles later they saw a monkey pressed under the mountain with his hands waving outside, and shouting, "Master, what took you so long? Just in time! Just in time! Get me out of here and I promise you'll reach the West and get the scriptures."



The Tang Priest went up to him and asked, "Why are you here and why did you call me Master?" Monkey replied, "I am Sun Wukong. Five hundred years ago I made a mess of the Heavenly Palace. To punish me the Lord Buddha put me under this mountain. Some time ago the Bodhisattva Guanyin told me you would come and rescue me, and ever since then I've been waiting for you day and night. Please let me protect you on your way to fetch the scriptures."



After hearing that, the Tang Priest said, "Since you seem so kind, I would like to have you as my disciple. How can I get you out?" Sun Wukong said, "On top of this mountain is a huge rock. If you can tear the paper with the golden words on it off the rock, I'll be able to climb out myself."



When Xuanzang and Liu Boqin climbed the mountain, they found the big rock with a piece of paper pasted on it. The Tang Priest went up and tore the paper off the rock, and both of them went back down the mountain.



At the foot of the mountain, the Tang Priest told the Monkey King, "I tore that paper off. You can come out." The delighted Monkey said, "Master, you'd better stand well clear so I don't frighten you when I come out."



Liu Boqin and the Tang Priest went three or four miles away. They heard Monkey shout, "Farther, farther," so they kept on going. When they were far away there was a great noise like thunder and the Five Elements Mountain split apart. The Monkey King jumped out.



Sun Wukong bowed low to the Tang Priest, who said to him, "My disciple, I'll give you a Buddhist name." Monkey replied, "Thank you, Master, but I have one already: Sun Wukong." "Wonderful," exclaimed the Tang Priest. "I'll give you a nickname as well — Brother Monkey. Is that all right?"



"Yes, yes!" cried Sun Wukong. Liu Boqin then turned to Xuanzang and said, "Master, now you have someone to accompany you I'll leave you." The Tang Priest bowed to him in thanks. Liu Boqin returned the bow and with that they parted.



Sun Wukong helped his new master mount the horse and led it with the baggage on his own back. Suddenly a ferocious tiger jumped at them. The Tang Priest was so terrified that he fell off the horse. The Monkey King hurried up to him and said, "Have no fear, Master. I can deal with this tiger."



Putting down the baggage, Sun Wukong pulled a needle from his ear and waved it in the air. It became a gold-banded cudgel three yards long. He weighed it in his hand and smiled. "I haven't used this little treasure for over five hundred years," he said. Then he rushed at the tiger.



He shouted at the tiger, "Where do you think you're going?" The tiger crouched on the ground and didn't dare to move. Sun Wukong shouted again, "How dare you get in my master's way?" Then he smashed the cudgel into the tiger's head.



"Wonderful! Wonderful!" exclaimed the Tang Priest. Sun Wukong helped him mount his horse and they were on their way.



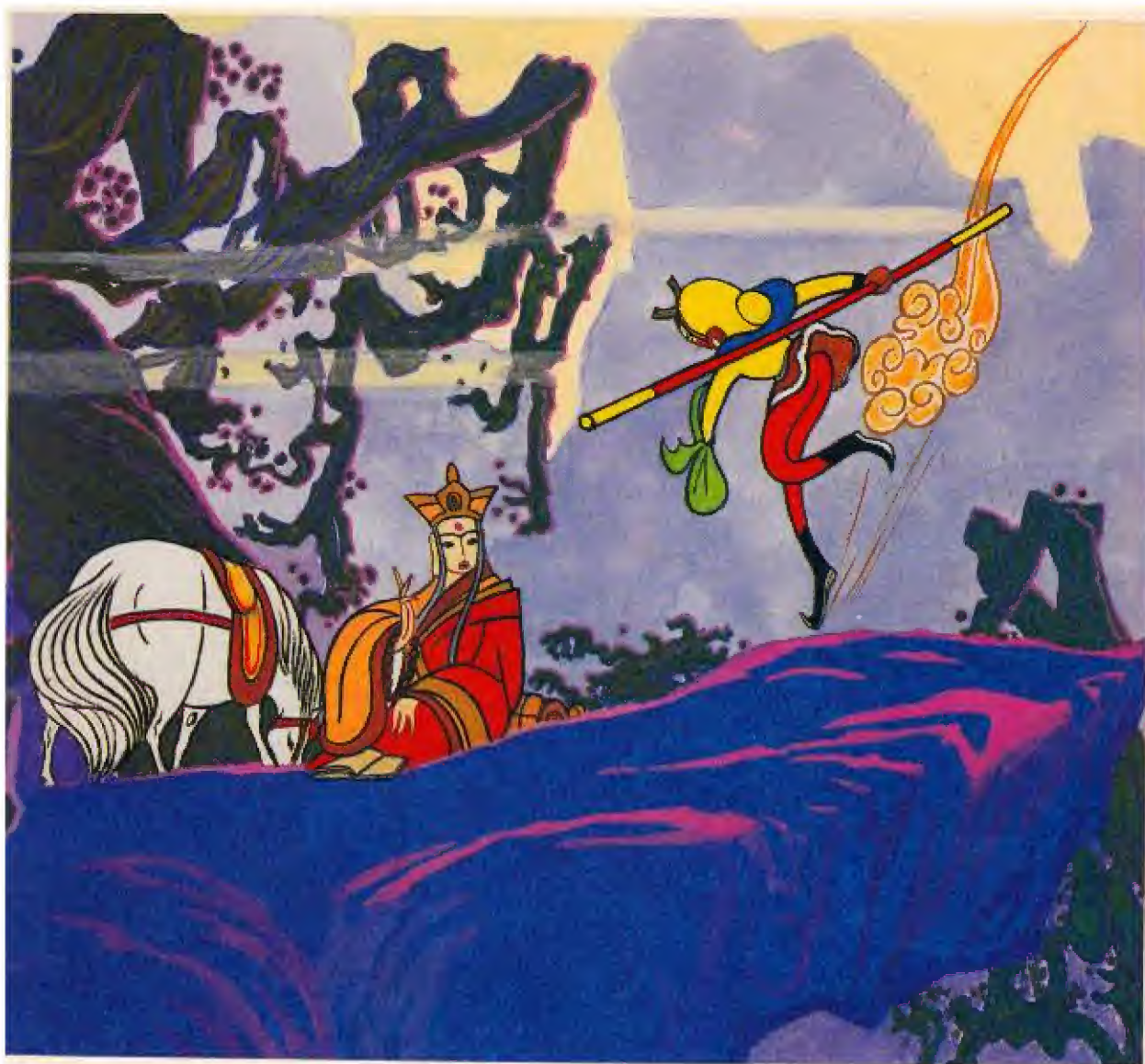
Several hours later, six bandits suddenly rushed out of the bushes at them, brandishing spears, swords and cutlasses in their hands. The bandits shouted, "Give us your horse and baggage and we'll spare your lives." Xuanzang was so frightened he nearly fell off his horse. "Don't worry, Master," said Monkey. "They've come to give us money for the journey."



The Monkey King stepped forward and said, "You bandits, give us all the treasures you've stolen!" This made the bandits angry and they rushed at Sun Wukong, waving their spears and swords. But Sun Wukong simply stood with his arms folded across his chest, motionless.



When the bandits saw that their weapons couldn't harm Sun Wukong, they were terrified and fled. But before they could get away, Monkey took his gold-banded cudgel from his ear and killed all six of them.



Sun Wukong took the gold and silver from their pockets and said to the Tang Priest, "Let's go, Master. Those bandits are finished."



But the Tang Priest replied, "Now that you're a monk you should be kind. You should follow the saying, 'Spare the ants when you sweep the floor, cover the lamps to save the moths.' But you've killed six people. How can you go to the West? You're too evil, too evil."



Sun Wukong couldn't bear his master's complaint and said angrily, "If you say I can't go to the West, then I'm going back to the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit." And off he went by somersault towards the Eastern Ocean.



In low spirits now, the Tang Priest led his horse slowly towards the West with a staff in one hand. Presently he met an old woman. The Tang Priest bowed to her and asked her the way.



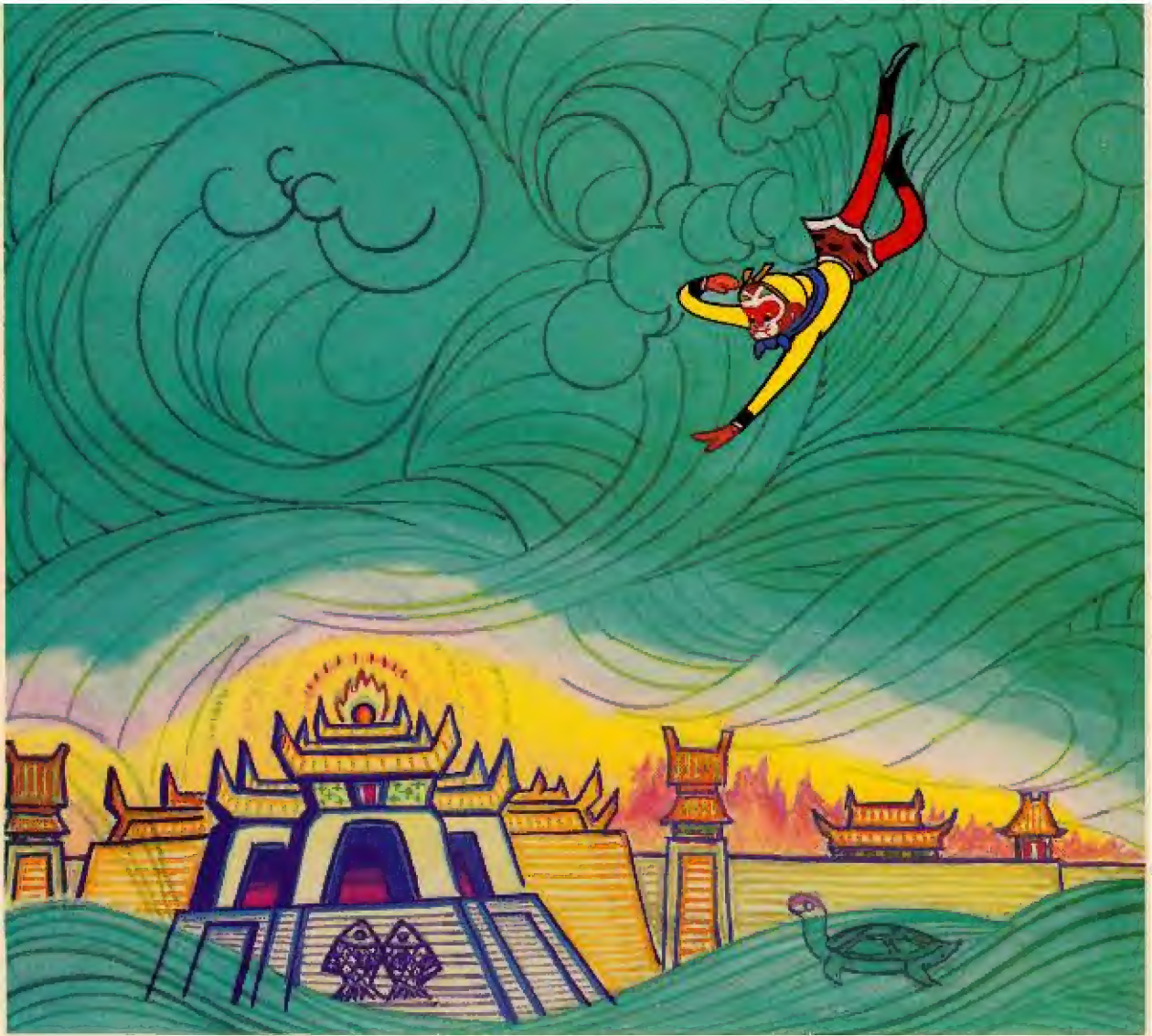
When the old woman learned that he was going to the West to fetch the true scriptures, she said, "It's a long way to the West. There are many monsters and ghosts along the way. How will you make it all by yourself with only a horse?" "I had a disciple," responded Xuanzang, "but I told him off for killing six bandits. He lost his temper and disappeared."



The old woman said, "Your disciple can't be far away. I can call him back." Then she gave him a hat inset with a golden band and said, "Put this hat on his head and I'll give you a spell called the Band-tightening Spell. If he's disobedient, you just have to recite the spell and he won't dare commit any more murders."



After the old woman had taught the Tang Priest to recite the spell, she changed into a beam of golden light and streaked into the sky. Then she changed back to her original form. Xuanzang realized that she was the Bodhisattva Guanyin, and he bowed in worship to the sky.



The Monkey King flew towards the Mountain of Flowers and Fruit after he had left his master. When he passed the Eastern Ocean he thought, "I haven't seen the old dragon for an awfully long time. I ought to visit him." So he landed his cloud, parted the waters and dived down to the underwater crystal palace.



When the Dragon King learned that he had come, he welcomed him to the palace and said, "I hear you have finished your suffering, Great Sage, and are escorting the Tang Priest to the West. Congratulations!" "Oh, that Tang Priest," laughed Monkey. "He doesn't know anything. He told me off because I killed some bandits. I couldn't bear it, so I'm going back home. I've dropped in to see you on the way."



“But Sun Wukong,” argued the Dragon King, “if you don’t protect the Tang Priest on his way to the West and won’t do as he says, then things could turn out badly for you later. Please think it over.” Sun Wukong decided that the Dragon King was right, said goodbye and left the Dragon Palace.



Soon he met the Bodhisattva Guanyin. "What are you doing here, Sun Wukong?" she asked. "Why aren't you escorting the Tang Priest to the West to get the scriptures?" Sun Wukong replied, "I just looked in at the Dragon King's palace. Now I'm going back to protect the Tang Priest." With a somersault he went straight to the West.



Monkey returned to find the Tang Priest sitting gloomily beside the path. He went up to him and said, "Master, I'm here." The Tang Priest said, "Wukong, I'm hungry. Get some provisions from my bundle. When we've eaten we can be on our way." When Monkey opened the bundle he found a hat with a golden band.



“Oh Master, please let me wear this hat!” pleaded Sun Wukong. Without waiting for permission, he took off his old hat and put the new one on.



As soon as Monkey had the hat on, the Tang Priest silently recited the Band-tightening Spell. The Monkey King put his hands on his head and shouted, "My head's aching, my head's aching!" He tried to pull the hat off but it seemed to have taken root on his head.



The Tang Priest couldn't bear to see Sun Wukong rolling on the ground in agony, so he stopped reciting the spell. At that very moment Monkey's pain disappeared. Monkey knew at once that his master had done something to him, so he demanded, "What curse did you put on me to give me a headache like that?" "I didn't put a curse on you, I recited the Band-tightening Spell," replied Xuanzang.



"Who taught you that spell, Master?" asked Sun Wukong. "An old lady," the Tang Priest replied. Thinking it over, Monkey said, "I'm sure it was the Bodhisattva Guanyin." And he raised his cudgel to strike the Tang Priest.



The Tang Priest hurried to recite the spell. Sun Wukong's head began to ache terribly again. He dropped his cudgel and fell to the ground shouting, "Master, stop saying the spell! I promise to protect you on the way to the West to get the true scriptures." The Tang Priest stopped and asked, "Will you obey me now?" "Yes," said Monkey. From then on he faithfully escorted Xuanzang to the West.



One day as they rode past a gorge the Monkey King and the Tang Priest could hear the sound of water. But then there was a big noise in the gorge as a dragon jumped out of the waves at the Tang Priest. Quickly Monkey grabbed the Tang Priest and carried him to safety. The dragon, unable to catch up with Sun Wukong, swallowed the white horse instead, saddle and all.



Monkey put the Tang Priest down and returned to the gorge, but he could not see either the white horse or the dragon. He was sure that the dragon had eaten the horse. He shouted loudly to the water, "Give us back our horse, you mud loach!"



The dragon was resting at the bottom of the stream after eating the white horse. But he heard the shouts, came to the surface of the water and said to Sun Wukong, "Yes, I ate your horse. What are you going to do about it?" "I'm going to kill you," replied Monkey, who raised his cudgel and began to hit the dragon.



When the dragon could not beat Sun Wukong, he turned himself into a snake and slithered away. Monkey looked for him everywhere but couldn't find him. He stood at the edge of the water and cursed. Then suddenly he heard someone calling him. "Stop cursing, Sun Wukong," the voice said, "I'm here." Sun Wukong raised his head and saw the Bodhisattva.



Jumping straight into the sky with a somersault, the Monkey King shouted, "You old woman, why did you make me suffer with that hat?" The Bodhisattva laughed. "You monkey, how else could you be controlled? Just be quiet and I'll give you a horse."



The Bodhisattva shouted to the water, "Come out, son of the Dragon King Ao Run! The pilgrim who is going to fetch the scriptures is here." The young dragon leaped up through the waves, took human form and said to the Bodhisattva, "I have been waiting a very long time for this pilgrim who is going to fetch the scriptures."



The Bodhisattva pointed to the Monkey King and said, "He's the pilgrim's disciple." The dragon looked at Sun Wukong and said, "He didn't say anything to me about fetching scriptures."



The Bodhisattva said to Sun Wukong, "Later on when you meet others on your way, you'd better tell them first thing that you're going to the West to fetch the scriptures. Do remember." "Yes, yes," replied Sun Wukong.



Then she breathed on the dragon and shouted, "Change!" The dragon immediately became a white horse. The Bodhisattva told him, "Now you must go with the pilgrims to get the true scriptures. Once you have paid for your sins you will get your golden body back as a reward." The dragon horse nodded.



Sun Wukong led the dragon horse to the Tang Priest and told him what had happened. The Tang Priest knelt down to thank the Bodhisattva.



Sun Wukong helped the Tang Priest mount the dragon horse. They crossed the gorge. Many more adventures lay ahead on their way to the West. If you want to know what happened next, read the explanation in the next instalment.

The whole series of 34 books will be in full colour throughout. The first eight titles are:

1. The Beginnings of Monkey
2. Monkey Makes Havoc in Heaven
3. Monkey's Conversion
4. Trouble on Black Wind Mountain
5. The Coming of Pig
6. Friar Sand Joins the Pilgrims
7. Stealing the Magic Fruit
8. The Yellow Robe Monster



The *MONKEY SERIES* are picture books based on the ancient Chinese fantasy novel *Journey to the West*, a story rich in tales about demons and monsters who try to stop the Tang Priest Xuanzang from reaching the Thunder Monastery in India to fetch Buddhist scriptures. The real hero of this novel, loved for four hundred years by Chinese readers, is the resourceful, brave and humorous Monkey.

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